Protest against New Export-Import Policy

*408. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether any State Government has made a protest against the New Export Import policy;

(b) if so, what are the reasons given in the protest; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN)

(a) to (c) The State Government of Kerala has expressed certain reservations regarding removal of QRs on 714 items which may affect the economy of the State of Kerala as well as the Country. According to them, many items on which QRs have now been removed are in the category of processed foods and consumer items including items of daily use such as salt and tapioca which may affect the local manufacturers/producers of these items. In addition, the State Government has also expressed the view that free importability of luxuary items may lead to conspicuous expenditure and reduce the domestic savings.

The Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) were being maintained ever since 1974 on balance of payment (BOP) grounds. The Quantitative Restrictions were being removed progressively in line with the policy of import liberalisation. However, with the improvement in the BOP position, certain members of the WTO had disputed the need to continue with QRs for BOP reasons. India could negotiate with most of the trading partners with the exception of USA for phasing out these QRs. USA filed a dispute and the Dispute Settlement Panel constituted in November, 1997 ruled against India. India filed an appeal before the Appellate Body of WTO against the findings of the Panel but the Appellate Body also upheld the findings of panel. Consequently, under an agreement signed between India and USA, QRs on 714 items have been removed with effect from1-4-2000 and those on the remaining 715 items are to be removed by 1-4-2001. The QRs in respect of these 1429 tariff lines were withdrawn preferentially for imports from SAARC countries w.e.f. 1st August, 1998.

The customs duties on most of the items for which QRs have been removed, has already been raised to the peak level of 35%. On some agricultural items like rice, duty has been raised in the case of rice upto 80%, on apples to 50% and on maize to 50%. The imports are being closely monitored and Government is determiend to ensure through appropriate use of tariff mechanism that imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to the domestic producers. Moreover, in the event of any unfair trade practice being adopted by exporters of other countries or if there were to be a sudden surge in imports causing injury to the domestic industry, sufficient provisions are available in the form of anti-dumping/safeguard measures to protect the domestic industry.

Developmental activities in the Information and Broadcasting Units in Assam

*409. Dr. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) the details of developmental activities undertaken to provide latest technologies including best satellite uplinking facilities, in the Information and Broadcasting units in Assam;

(b) the cadre-wise numbers of vacancies in the various departments of Information and Broadcasting Ministry in Assam; and

(c) the steps taken to fill these vacancies and the expected time by which this exercise will be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN JAITELY) : (a) Details of developmental activities are as follows :

BROADCASTING SECTOR

1. *DOORDARSHAN*

Guwahati Doordarshan is already equipped with uplinking facility both in analog and digital mode. Besides an LPT at Bokakhat and a transponder at Guwahati for DD-1 service in the State of Assam, High Power Transmitters at Guwahati & Silchar in replacement of LPTs, are under implementation.

2. *ALL INDIA RADIO*

In respect of All India Radio, at Tezpur radio station with multipurpose studio set up and 20 KW MW Transmitter is ready for commissioning and at